

"Lighthouses"

A "Bed-time Story" told from 2FC



Now that broadcasting has been established in high class and permanent lines by Farmer and Company, Limited, of Sydney, Australian children have become quite keen in their demands to "listen-in" during the session which is regularly set apart at 2FC for their own amusement.

Every evening between half-past six and seven o'clock Farmer's "Hello Man," Mr. A. S. Cochrane, the announcer at 2CF, devotes himself wholeheartedly to the amusement and entertainment of the little ones, and throughout the entire length and breadth of Australia children have learned to look forward to the time for the evening chimes and the "Lamplighter" story which follows them.

Recently, Mr. F. W. Stevens, one of the engineers attached to Farmer's Station, prepared for the benefit of the kiddies a most fascinating storyette concerning a matter on which all small boys, at any rate, are interested — lighthouses. Mr. Stevens himself was brought up in a lighthouse and his story which was read to the children by Mr. Cochrane was therefore a very real one.

"In the years of long ago," Mr. Stevens wrote, "before steamers were built and only sailing vessel were used, such things as lighthouses did not exist. However, after a long time, a man named Captain Cook sailed away from England on a scientific expedition to Tahiti, an island in the middle of the great Pacific Ocean. After he had finished his work there, he sailed in a westerly direction and one fine morning the man on the look-out sighted land. That land was what is now known all over the world as a part of Australia.

"Captain Cook sailed up the coast from what we now call Cape Howe, past Sydney, and landed at Botany Bay, near La Perouse, first. He then went past Brisbane, and his ship was wrecked on the Great Barrier Reef near Cooktown. He managed to patch his vessel, the *Endeavour*, and went on his way round the North of Australia,

"By-and-by other ships came to Australia, and it was realized that something must be done to put some kind of mark on the shore, so that captains could tell where they were. At first a cairn or heap of stones, was used, but this was only effective in the daytime, so the men had to think of something which would show at night as well. A large, high building was made with a light on the top. In the daytime the building could be seen, and at night, the light would show. As time went on, and more lighthouses were built, it was seen that some difference would need to be made in the lights of different lighthouses. In the daytime it was simple, as the shape of the land and the position of the lighthouse would be enough, but at night, when all was pitch dark, it was different. After many years of experimenting and investigation, the present day lighthouse, which is a wonder in itself, was evolved.

"To start and tell you all about one single lighthouse and all that happens there would take me a long, long time.

"For the present I will just say a few words about the difference between one lighthouse and another. I should tell you that of all the dozens of lighthouses there are on the Australian coast there are not two alike. They may look alike to you, but at night the lights they show are all different from one another. One is arranged so that the prisms, or large pieces of cornered glass, revolve round or turn round—say, three times per minute—another will turn round twice per minute, and another, perhaps only once, and with each turn, the prisms shoot a stream of light across the sea. By counting the number of beams of light per minute the captain of a steamer knows what lighthouse it is.

"Others are what we call occulting lights. That is, they do not revolve but a big shutter worked by very large clockworks drops down over the light and then jumps up again so many times a minute.

"At a place called Point Lonsdale, at the entrance to Port Phillip Bay, at the head of which, of course, stands

Melbourne, many years ago there was a lighthouse built of wood and there was a fixed light in it. By a fixed light, I mean one which neither turned round nor went on or out. You could see it all the time at night. This wooden tower got very old and was unsafe, so it was decided to build a new, big concrete tower, and it was such a beauty, all painted white with the roof or dome quite black. When it was quite ready to light and it was to be the last time the old one was to be lighted, a little boy about four-years-old who lived at the lighthouse was lifted up by his daddy and the little boy lit that old, old light for the last time. For many years that good old light had shown at night and told captains it was at Point Lonsdale, and now it was being lit for the last time.

"Now that little boy is a big man, and it is he who has written this story especially for you. Some lighthouses are built out on little islands in the sea, so that they will show at night and tell captains of big ships not to come too close or they will be shipwrecked. Just near where I said Captain Cook first saw Australia there is an island called Gabo Island, and on it is built the highest lighthouse of any in Australia. It is built of granite, hard brown stone. At a lighthouse like one sees at South Head, Sydney, the men in charge or as they are called—Lightkeepers—can come into Sydney and get food, but at some other places such as Clifftop Island, off the Victorian coast, or at Kent Group in Bass Straits, between Tasmania and Victoria, and at many others, a steamer only calls once every three months with stores, and in some cases as infrequently as six months. For that long time the men and their wives and little boys and girls live away there and never see another soul.

"That is all I can tell you this time, but if you are interested perhaps some other time I will write another little story for your 'Hello Man' to read you, telling all about what I did when I was a little boy living on a lighthouse right out on the sea."